

Latin American and Caribbean Women in Film/Video

A Course File

When a teacher decides to teach about Latin American women and film, she often has just a few films in mind -- perhaps LUCIA or SALT OF THE EARTH or a film with Carmen Miranda. The teacher may have a special reason for deciding to teach this topic. She may be teaching in a school with many Latino students, know Spanish, or have traveled in Latin America. She may be a person of color. In contrast, a teacher who knows little about cultural perspectives different from her own often hesitates to teach creative material from other cultures or subcultures.

Both kinds of teachers, those familiar with a culture or subculture who want to introduce it to their class and those unfamiliar with a culture who want to learn about it while teaching it, can use representations by and about "others" for a new pedagogical purpose. They can explore this course material with a class in a way that explores what multicultural education might be, perhaps creating such an educational experience for the first time for everyone in the class. If taught in the way I indicate below, such a course on Latin American women's film and video can even challenge many of the premises of national cinema or women's cinema courses as they are usually taught.

For most students, the benefit of such a course minimally comes from their learning more cultural information; it may also lead to their articulating concepts of gender or ethnicity in a new way. The teacher should indicate that the media and books for the course will explicitly deal with inter-relations between gender, race, class, and ethnicity. The films and videos will show how oppressed peoples are struggling to build more just societies and create more empowering representations of themselves.

The course as a whole deals with how race, gender, and nation are *represented*, and with how these representations are denied or deployed internationally. It places in perspective and challenges institutional power and hegemonic discourse. It allows new connections to be drawn between media representations, social structures, intercultural communication strategies, and each individual's own cultural identity. The teacher should be aware of how women students and students of color in the class might want to use this material to affirm and build their own sense of gender and ethnic identity. Optimally, the course material and the interaction the teacher sets up between the students can lead to an awareness of how everyone constructs themselves through others and how a dialectical juxtaposition of identities and traditions can provide an alternative, liberating way to learn.

People who are not in the strongest social and economic position within a culture constantly have to negotiate their ethnic, gender and cultural identities. The limited representations of them which circulate in the dominant media reinforce oppressive institutions and ideology. Artistic representations by and from such groups are one of the main ways which oppressed peoples have to build and sustain resistance cultures and renew their own sense of cultural identity. Typically a class on Latin American women's media will contain Latino students -- both men and women, other students of color, anglo women students, and probably fewer anglo men students. Furthermore, the

students' mixed ethnic identities, differing relations to language and skin color, different sexual orientations, and different social class backgrounds make the students a very useful resource to teach from. The students' shifting, individualized relations to the cultural representations presented in class should be a part of what the class studies.

The central focus for written assignments is a journal. The teacher poses questions to focus the writing. The entries should be made an integral part of daily discussion. In particular, the journals will give insights into how the course material is received as familiar (e.g., it uses fiction or documentary media conventions, oral history, social science discourse) or unfamiliar. The shifting intellectual and emotional topographies of student response to the works, as recorded in their journals, will reveal how viewers and readers in the United States use material by and about other cultures. The students (and the media and literature studied) are trying to make the foreign familiar. While doing that, the students may also have to be taught how to respect, not efface, difference.

For students outside of Latino culture, one of the most common reactions will be, "I never knew about this before. I am glad to have the chance to learn all this." Obviously media and fiction from Latin America convey a great deal of information about people's situations and ways of thinking. Some students will receive the films and videos as transparent conduits of such information. The teacher should accept this kind of media reception as a partial good but should teach additional conceptual tools. First, the class should deal explicitly with the limits of mainstream media representations of Latin American cultures and of women, and analyze why such representations predominate. The students who are not from a Latin background should reflect on why they limit the kinds of information they allow to come to them about Latin America or to affect them profoundly. For example, people often set implicit limits on their curiosity. Have students write in the journals what kinds of questions they normally ask people they know, in contrast to what they could ask and expect an answer to. Journal entries can also probe how students may have unquestioningly accepted educational institutions' authority to dictate what is important to know.

For background material, a teacher can consult extensive feminist scholarship from and about women's lives internationally. She can also expand the scope of class discussion of just one or two works by inviting local people from an ethnic community or subculture represented in a film or tape to see and discuss it with the students. In my own experience teaching women's studies classes, I have found that Latina mothers and daughters, with the mother often foreign-born, effectively present Latin American women's issues to a class, as do women who are Salvadoran refugees living in sanctuary, or who are Latina community or labor organizers in the United States. One of the issues which will become clear from such face-to-face encounters with immigrants from Latin America is that race and ethnicity are not processes uniformly or simply experienced by people of color.

In South America the term "Latin" is a synthetic term, as is the word "Indian." Not everyone in South America speaks Spanish. Furthermore, Latin America has had a diversity of peoples since before the conquest. After the Spanish conquest in some countries the indigenous population was decimated; in others, indigenous cultures and

languages have remained a strong force. Native peoples do not refer to themselves as "Indians" but rather as "the people." Some countries had a slave trade and now have large black populations with an African heritage. Caribbean culture is distinct from Latin culture, although both share a common historical trajectory because of imperialism. And from the Spanish conquest to the present, one country, Puerto Rico, has never had independence from a foreign power.

U.S. television presents lots of information about other countries, but almost all "foreign images" on television are distorted, reduced, and filtered. This course must begin by teaching students what there is to gain by challenging usual sources of information and seeking out alternative ones. Such alternative sources most obviously include works by Latin American filmmakers and writers. They also include material from politically engaged artists and writers opposing U.S. imperialist intervention in Latin America, works which some students might originally be disposed to dismiss as biased.

Studying and learning from those other than oneself is the beginning of all intercultural understanding. However, such study must also be accompanied by an understanding of how one is using the other to construct oneself and one's sense of social process. What kind of discourse, what kind of language, what kind of power relations structure that leaning? It is not sufficient to consider alternative media merely as a better, somehow more authentic source of information. Students in a media class must consider the construction of media representation itself, the shaping of the communication in all its facets -- including the artist's milieu and resources, the film or tape as a text, and the context of the work's reception. Michel Foucault has written about the regime of truth, asking us to analyze the power structures which organize the production, regulation, circulation, and operation of statements. When we see or read a work about the oppressed, we do so within structures of reception established by hegemonic, capitalist institutions. In particular, at this time in history, there is an uneven international flow of knowledge. Students should query in their journals: "In terms of power relations, who wrote, filmed, edited, translated, distributed, and has used this work?" There is no objective overview from which to represent the world. But there are choices to be made at any stage of production and reception. Writing the course journal means learning how to analyze the parameters of such choice.

Unit One: Media Analysis/Social Analysis

U.S. television constantly demonstrates how the commercial mass media create fearful others. Media-sustained xenophobia is one of the main factors inhibiting intercultural understanding. Many people do not know about or, even more important, *want* to know about ways of life and experiences beyond their own or to expand their imagination beyond commonly accepted goals, fears, and fantasies. To counter such unproductive habits of media reception, a teacher in any discipline can regularly tape and discuss brief examples from television (across all genres, from advertising to mini-series to the nightly news) which illustrate mainstream media's racism and narrow cultural perspective. Certain media-and-politics issues are crucial to raise at the beginning of the course. First of all, a general audience will always have a cultural background shaped by concepts from the dominant culture. Each viewer brings in a set of assumptions. A

journal assignment can investigate how racial stereotypes function socially: List the countries of the world and ask what mental images come to mind about that country. Soon you will come to the point where just one or two stereotypical images represent a country or region. Sometimes these stereotypes are accompanied by religious stereotypes, often in reference to Islam or Catholicism, but even more in reference to religious practices, such as Haiti being represented by a mental image of voodoo. Such reduced modes of representation demonstrate the mechanisms of racism. The simplicity and paucity of "peripheral" images about "peripheral" peoples leave us with a comfortable feeling: "I already know about the issues, lives and values of those people, and the received ideas or images I have on that subject just need to take up this tiny space in my mind."

Second, for each work seen the students can write an entry challenging their own reception of the work. They should ask how film form or their own cinematic or political expectations might have limited what they understood when they saw a work. In a sense, every media or literary work implicitly establishes how we are supposed to receive it and what it is "about." Clarity and persuasiveness in a film/video work are often qualities we attribute to it when it relies on intellectual structures, verbal and cinematic vocabulary, and pacing with which we are already familiar. Yet even with a conventionally constructed work, a viewer may still reject its levels of complexity, contradictions, and analyses, especially if it goes against the viewer's presuppositions.

To test this kind of rejection, ask students to analyze or give a personal response to the frequent appearance of the word *imperialism* in the films and tapes. Commonly, U.S. viewers will reveal a politically induced "blind-spot" in dismissing Latin speakers' use of the word, imperialism. The word often induces ennui or is rejected as political rhetoric. Yet for both ordinary people and for intellectuals in South America, the word, imperialism, summarizes and explains many interacting structures, some of which go back centuries, which shape their daily lives and tie them in an oppressive way to U.S. history and the current U.S. political agenda.

Less overtly political but also important to consider are the ways that narrative fictions create closure and tension, and how they use character type and predictable hooks (lovers, children, heroes, villains, victims) to sustain identification. In fact, the same dramatic closure, type, and linear cause-effect discourse shape most documentaries. Students should learn to analyze how the generalizations and abstractions made in a film depend on the maker's previous political and aesthetic assumptions (rarely explicitly stated). Ask what has gotten flattened out to make this kind of work. One journal entry should take up the concept of positive images: Discuss how much of the material -- reading and media -- was made to mobilize people for action or to make visible cultural realities usually ignored or suppressed. If one wishes to produce new knowledge and new structures, to disrupt old boundaries, and to use this knowledge for the sake of action, what does that mean in terms of producing media? What choices about subject matter or aesthetic tactics best accomplish these goals? In terms of subject matter, what does it mean for a film/tape to use positive images or to reveal negative or contradictory aspects of oppressed peoples' lives? (See articles by Linda Artel and Susan Wengraf and by Diane Waldman, in Steven, ed.)

In this unit, the films and videotapes not only deal with Latin American issues but explicitly raise issues about media form. The reading ranges from oral history and ethnography to works which criticize the very kinds of documents studied in the course. *A Man When He Is a Man* is a documentary by Chilean filmmaker in exile, Valeria Sarmiento, which offers an overview of machismo in Latin America. It works on two levels; one level lets men reveal their own sexism, the other satirizes romantic conventions in Latin American popular culture, including love ballads and fictional film. *FROM HERE, FROM THIS SIDE*, a collage video by Gloria Ribe which was banned from Mexican television, offers a witty collection of found media images which interrogate Hollywood's version of Latin America and show how Mexicans view the power of the United States. These pieces deal with two aspects of women's political thinking in contemporary Latin America, the analysis of machismo and the analysis of imperialism. Both works challenge traditional documentary form. In formal contrast is a more traditionally structured documentary, *The Global Assembly Line* by U.S. director, Lorraine Gray, shows the effect of multinational corporations' closing plants in the United States and establishing runaway shops in underdeveloped countries to exploit a labor force often composed of poverty-stricken women.

Several works deal explicitly with U.S. media representations of Latin America. Some of these come from the cable access television series, *Paper Tiger Television*, which analyzes the mass media from a left-feminist perspective. Two shows which take up the recurrent issues of sexism and imperialism are *Adiós Machismo: Jean Franco Reads Mexican Novelas*, which analyzes photo-novels, a popular genre with a broad female readership in Latin America, and *Everyday It Gets Harder to Be a Good Housewife: Michele Mattelart Reads the Chilean Press "Avant-Coup,"* which analyzes how CIA-financed, Chilean newspapers recruited middle-class housewives into publicly opposing the Allende government before its violent overthrow.

Two experimental videos, one humorous and one serious, deal with the distorted ways that Latin America is represented in our media and by our government to maintain U.S. political power in the region. *Out of the Mouths of Babes* by Sherry Millner and Ernie Larsen, uses the directors' two-year-old daughter's language-learning to let us grasp the follies and abusiveness of U.S. policy in Central America. *A Simple Case for Torture, or How to Sleep at Night* by Martha Rosler is a scholarly essay-video which juxtaposes U.S. news reports, opinion pieces, scholarly texts, and Central Americans' testimonials to provoke thought about how U.S. politicians and media create and exploit the concept: terrorism.

The reading for this section should deal with the main issues regarding representation and the binary opposition: other and self. These are crucial issues in media, ethnographic, and feminist theory. The teacher should regularly introduce some of the best texts in feminist ethnography and discuss ways ethnographers have developed to study individual lives and social structures cross-culturally. Throughout my discussion of the reading I will make reference to material which is not specifically about Latin America but sets out social issues in ways which have helped me structure my teaching. For example, Carol Stack's *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* describes a structure too often ignored in feminist analyses -- the extended family as one

of the major ways which women have for organizing social relations and distributing scarce resources. The family sustains and recreates patriarchy, but among poor women it also establishes a woman's supportive relations with the other women in her extended family. Stack describes participant-observation methodology and demonstrates a model for how white feminist academics can work as committed outsiders in a less-privileged community. Although this book is about working with black families in the United States, it is a crucial resource, especially useful for students who might wish to make documentaries. Stack's approach eschews total cultural relativism. Rather she develops a method for taking social and personal responsibility for her privileged class position, her relations with the subjects of her study, and the kind of book she wrote. These issues are very important in a film/video course. Media *about* or *with* a socially disadvantaged group can never simply be assumed to be *of* that group; media makers almost always are upwardly mobile in class terms (see Chuck Kleinhans in Waugh, ed.). Furthermore, U.S. viewers of media about Latin American women often see such films in a privileged university environment; they must interrogate their relation to this media, which they consume, and to the women and the cultures being analyzed.

Similar in function and genesis to the feminist documentary film, oral histories have played a key role in feminist scholarship. They provide testimonials from oppressed peoples whose record of experience might otherwise might have been lost. They speak a version of reality ordinarily suppressed and erased by dominant thought. For example, Joan of Arc's trial record is a singular document from that period of history which records a peasant woman's simple words, an unique record of a common European woman's voice. In the United States, slave narratives collected by the WPA writers' project and photographs of slaves collected by racist social scientists remain crucial documents in African-American history. Much of feminist scholarship across disciplines deals with the reasons why women have been denied the voice. Concomitantly feminists have engaged in a broad, interdisciplinary effort to empower women to tell and publish their own life stories, to have women's experiences be heard and understood, and to make dominant institutions listen when organized women speak (see B. Ruby Rich, "Crisis of Naming in Feminist Film Criticism").

An excellent example of feminist oral history is Daphne Patai's *Brazilian Women Speak*. In this collection, ordinary Brazilian women from many walks of life in Rio and the rural northeast tell about their everyday lives, dreams, limitations, and rebellions. The author's extensive notes give background information and biographical details, as well as brief analyses of women's legal status, education, health conditions, economic possibilities, black and feminist activism, and participation in religion both through liberation theology and Afro-Brazilian cults. In her key introductory essay, "On Constructing a Self," Patai, as author and outsider, analyzes how she collects, uses and interprets women's oral histories. Her discussion of her relation to the women interviewed and the advantages and constraints of doing interviews should be required reading for the course.

Other useful feminist scholarship about Latin American women, in this instance, dealing more with the structures which shape women's lives in particular areas of the continent, is found in June Nash and Helen Safa's anthology, *Women and Change in*

Latin America. Topics covered in this anthology include women's work in Latin America and the Caribbean, biological and social reproduction, women's participation in market, industrial and farming strata in specific countries, migration to the United States, women and torture, women in Cuba. The footnotes give important data and complete bibliographies.

This kind of social study can teach not only information but also analytic structures. Understanding social structures provides a sophisticated basis for analyzing hegemonic media's representations of the other or for evaluating self-representations from an under-represented group. Teaching such concepts regularly occurs in courses on national cinema or women's cinema (e.g. such as when feminist film criticism analyzes the social, psychological, and media structures which derive from and reinforce compulsory heterosexuality [Adrienne Rich]). In this course, it is important to teach social analyses of women's lives in Latin America which deal with the complexities of a situation and which explain social circumstances in a country which might not be self-evident. Lourdes Arguelles and B.Ruby Rich's articles on gays and lesbians in Cuba provide a model of such writing. In those essays, the authors acknowledge the truth of a presupposition that U.S. readers may hold, i.e., that there is visible social hostility toward gay men in Cuba. Arguelles and Rich analyze the historical development of and the material Cuba now to that of pre-Stonewall homosexual culture in the United States. They add two important insights that many people do not consider in terms of this controversial issue: lesbians in Cuba have greatly benefitted from Cuban economic policy which guarantees all women the opportunity for economic advancement, and thus financial independence from parents and spouse; the issue of homosexuality in Cuba has been manipulated by the United States government, through Cuban emigré organizations, for its foreign policy and domestic control initiatives.

As students learn more about social processes in Latin America, they can deal more critically with the tapes and films seen in class. Their journal entries can take up the following issues: "To what degree do these media makers know the lifeways and language of the people filmed? How well does a film translate the systems of meaning which lie behind and within what that film shows: that is, the meanings inherent in everyday practices, body language, expressions of feeling, and other cultural forms? I say "translate" advisedly, for not only is accurate translation crucial, it is also always a goal which can only be approached. Verbal and social translations always simplify, seek to impose order, generalize, and blur or miss something. Economic and social structures are determining factors in people's lives. Understanding these factors explains much about what lies under the surface of phenomena and images. However, U.S. media almost always eschews presenting structure.

There is a disadvantage as well to looking at a culture mainly in terms of structure. Such an approach downplays flux, individual experience, and moments of rupture. Students should also ask of each work: "What kinds of thing would people notice in that culture? What would it mean to understand x phenomenon from this person's point of view? In other words, how is subjectivity constructed for a person in x position in y culture?"

A study of one region, Peru, gives an idea of what feminist anthropology takes as its range of concerns. Carol Andreas' *When Women Rebel: The Rise of Popular Feminism in Peru* takes as its subject matter an issue of concern to women activists throughout the world. How does change for women occur? What steps can women take to organize for change and what are the historical constraints they face? Andreas documents how Peruvian women have organized in coastal fishing villages, in peasant unions in the Andes, and in poor urban communities in the large cities, to which many rural families migrate looking for work. She also analyses how foreign economic penetration, Peru's dependent capitalism, and women's position in the peripheral sector of Peru's economy shape ordinary women's consciousness about the difficulties facing them and their goals. One of the most acute issues Andreas takes up is ethnocide in the jungle and remote mountain areas. More recently Andreas has expanded her discussion of the historical complexity of women's organizing in Peru by analyzing Sendero Luminoso's appeal to women peasants and intellectuals. Although this organization has an autocratic leader, a cruel policy of unbridled assassination of opponents, and direct attacks on grass-roots organizations, many of which Andreas had described as women's organizations in her earlier book. Sendero seems to find its greatest support among women. Andreas adds an important historical footnote to her earlier study by explaining women's experiences with the state, communal structures, and the traditional left -- all of which draw them into this movement (Andreas, "Women at War").

At the same time that the course presents this kind of information about Latin American women, students should also be informed about the range of issues currently debated in anthropology, media studies, and writings by feminists of color. A standard text on anthropological filmmaking critiques assumptions about photographic objectivity although it does not challenge the media's capacity to document per se. In particular, John and Malcolm Collier usefully discuss how social relations and processes are encoded in visual imagery and sound recordings, and how to understand the cultural significance of objects in an environment. Challenging the very notion of realist representation and its capacity to adequately depict the lives of others are many of the essays in *Writing Culture*, edited by James Clifford and George Marcus. This is one of the founding texts of postmodernist anthropology, which takes as its task examining the textual strategies used to write about cultures and the power held or reinforced by the people who write (film) such texts. Media students should similarly analyze how media style or the representational tactics of film and video confer an unwarranted authority on the filmmaker and on the filmic text. As Talal Asad points out, people in a superior position feel entitled to directly apprehend, in unmediated fashion, historically or socially distant institutions and cultural meaning. This may mean that as viewers or as media makers, we assume we and the people depicted in television, video, or film share similar worlds, or it may mean our seeing the others as less well defined, less well developed, or less fully formed. It may especially result in our idealizing or pitying the poor (e.g., in elegies for vanishing cultures or pessimistic visions of urban life). The people whose lives are interpreted in the mass media can rarely effectively challenge their representation. Even more insidious, the international authority of published writing and media in a European language is such that texts by outsiders often reinscribe a people's memory itself (Talal in Clifford, ed.). Furthermore, part of the literary and cultural heritage of many countries are narrative traditions which use

utopian pastorales or "poor people struggling but overwhelmed by their environment" naturalist frameworks. These are often modes which educated people in various parts of the world will turn to to inscribe their people's history and experience.

Julianne Burton's *The Social Documentary in Latin America* should be chosen as a course text. It has essays which cover film/video history and practice in general and also in-depth studies of many of the works I discuss here. Also useful is Burton's *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America: Conversations with Filmmakers* in which the trajectory of contemporary Latin American filmmaking, documentary and fictional, is told from the makers' own perspectives. Looking at these issues from an oppositional viewpoint, Cuban-born author Edmundo Desnoes analyzes how images of his native country have circulated in the international press, which is always hungry for exotica from the "underdeveloped" world. He also challenges the cultural reduction and international marketability of photographs from around the world which emotionally convey the concept: the family of man.

There are several key articles which indicate how film theory itself must change to deal authentically with racial representation. Coco Fusco has offered a trenchant critique of the ways that white feminist film critics have liberally taken up the topics of race and the "Third World." Those critics have celebrated works by artists of color, reifying the artists into an essential ethnic position, while refusing to analyze their own ethnocentrism of privileging white subjectivity as the main reference point for film criticism. These feminists, says Fusco, must analyze their own white ethnicity and not treat ethnicity as a quality or subject position which belongs to people of color alone. Continuing this argument, Isaac Julien and Kobena Mercer point out that filmmakers of color have such limited funds and access to making media that they often do not have the luxury of presenting an individualized or particular perspective, as white artists do. Rather these artists of color feel pressured to represent the experience and problems of their entire ethnic group, subculture, or race. And then when they do succeed in speaking for the many, for their community, their action feeds into tokenism. It's as if their one film or tape could somehow speak for "an entire social category which is seen to be 'typified' by its representative" (Julien and Mercer, 5). Julien and Mercer challenge the very concept of "otherness." They analyze how the use of that term in cultural criticism shapes discourse in terms of a binary relation. It vests authority in the voice of the person speaking/writing/filming from a central perspective. It relegates all other perspectives or modes of cultural production to a position of marginality, as something which occurs elsewhere or far away.

Finally, although I grant ethnography and oral history a privileged space in this course, it is important to teach the limits of such material. It is often difficult for students to learn the impossibility of translating culture directly. Oral history and testimonials seem to do just that. We grant authority to the writer/filmmaker/ethnographer who has an intense engagement with her subjects, a knowledge of the language and region, and participant-observation methodology. But then, when we are recipients of a text, it seems as if personal narrative and personal guarantees of authenticity establish the validity of a text as an unmediated and transparent vehicle for communicating "social reality." The immediacy of eyewitness testimony and the sincerity and lived experience

of writers/filmmakers seem to be the guarantee that the text will reveal to us everything we could or should know about these people's lives. It seems all to be there on the surface just waiting for us to apprehend it by reading the book or watching the film/tape.

This issue of transparency and communicability raises a question which students should address in their journals at different times and in relation to different works: What is or is not the universality of women's concerns? Ethnicities are not based on identical historical structures or ways of life. In this shrinking world all women are shaped by intercultural influences, and many women, especially women of color, acutely feel multicultural, contradictory layers of self. Cross-culturally women often share bonds of solidarity and intimacy. They also may share common ideas, on the basis of what they mutually interpret as common sense, or they may have had similar experiences in their lives, especially in the domestic sphere. At this moment in history, feminist scholarship and feminist activism need to generalize about women's lives, albeit imperfectly, in order to contest restrictive, exclusionary codes in all areas of social, economic, and cultural life. For some women, including myself, "feminism" refers to an utopian project of collectively reconstructing women's experience on the basis of both commonalities and differences among us.

Key writings by women of color attack such an enterprise. Chandra Mohanty challenges not only the universalizing tendency of the word "feminism" but also the very word "woman." Trinh T. Minh-ha scathingly attacks the racism and patriarchal bias of anthropology as a discipline and the concept of the third world. She rejects realist representation and an essentialist notion of women's writing, but her prose style has the decentered and lyrical form familiar to contemporary feminist readers of women's prose. Placing issues of "first-" and "third-world" feminism in specific historical contexts is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose book *In Other Worlds*, along with Clifford and Marcus' *Writing Culture*, has been the source for many of my ideas here.

Readings --

Andreas, Carol. *when women rebel: the rise of popular feminism in peru*. Westport: Lawrence Hill, 1985

Andreas, Carol. "Women at War." *Nacla Report on the Americas*: Special issue, "Fatal Attraction: Peru's Shining Path" 24.4 (Dec.-Jan. 1990-91)

Arguelles, Lourdes and Rich, B. Ruby. "Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Revolution: Notes toward an Understanding of the Cuban and Lesbian Gay Experience. Part I." *Signs* 9.4 (Summer 1984); "Part II." *Signs* 11.1 (Autumn 1985)' "Reply to Montaro." *Signs* 11.2 (Winter 1986)

Artel, Linda and Wengraf, Susan. "Positive Images" in Steven, ed.

Burton, Julianne, ed. *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America: Conversations with Filmmakers*. Austin: Uof TX, 1986

Burton, Julianne, ed. *The Social Documentary in Latin America*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh, 1990

Clifford, James and Marcus, George, eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: U of CA, 1986

Collier, John and Malcolm. *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Albuquerque: U of NM, 1986

Desnôes, Edmundo. "The Photographic Image of Underdevelopment." *Jump Cut* 33, 1988

Fusco, Coco. "Fantasies of Oppositionality." *Screen* 29.4 (Autumn 1988)

Julien, Isaac and Mercer, Kobena. "De Centre and De Margin." *Screen* 29.4 (Autumn 1988)

Kleinhans, Chuck. "Forms, Politics, Makers and Contexts: Issues for a Theory of Radical Political Documentary" in Waugh, ed.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other*. Bloomington: Indiana U, 1989

Mohanty, Chandra. "Under Western Eyes." *Feminist Review* (Autumn 1988)

Nash, June and Safa, Helen. *Women and Change in Latin America*. South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey, 1986

Patai, Daphne. *Brazilian women speak: contemporary life stories*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers U Press, 1988

Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs* 5.4 (Summer 1980)

Rich, B. Ruby. "The Crisis of Naming in Feminist Filmmaking." *Jump Cut* 19 (1978)

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. London and New York: Methuen, 1987

Stack, Carol. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Harper and Row, 1974

Steven, Peter, ed. *Jump Cut: Hollywood, Politics, and Counter Cinema*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 1985

Waldman, Diane. "There's More to a Positive Image than Meets the Eye" in Steven, ed.

Waugh, Thomas. *Show Us Life! Toward a History and Aesthetics of the Committed Documentary*. Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1984

Additional Readings --

Anzaldua, Gloria; Moraga, Cherrie; and Bambara, Toni Cade. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York : Kitchen Table, 1983. Major feminist anthology by U.S. women of color.

Cisneros, Sandra, *The House on Mango Street*. Houston: Arte Publico, 1985. First-person novel narrated in brief sections, from the point of view of an adolescent Mexican-American woman living in a poor latino neighborhood in Chicago. Poetic and brief.

Flores, Angel and Kate, eds. *The Defiant Muse: Hispanic Feminist Poems from the Middle Ages to the Present*. New York: Feminist Press, CUNY, 1986. Succinct introduction, biographies of poets, and lively selections. Appropriate for undergraduates, to whom it is important to present at least one bilingual written text.

Gomez, Alma; Moraga, Cherrie; and Carmona, Mariana-Romo. *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*. New York: Kitchen Table, 1983. English and Spanish.

Hahner, June E., ed. *Women in Latin American History: Their Lives and Views*. Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center, 1976. Women from different countries and social strata tell their own story across history from colonial times to the present. Succinct introductions to each sections.

Media --

Adiós Machismo: Jean Franco Reads Mexican Novelas (U.S. 1986) 28 min., video, Paper Tiger

Everyday It Gets Harder to Be a Good Housewife: Michele Mattelart Reads the Chilean Press "Avant-Coup" (U. S.1988) video, 28 min., Paper Tiger

FROM HERE, FROM THIS SIDE (Mexico 1987) Gloria Ribe, video, 24 min., Women Make Movies

THE Global Assembly Line (U.S. 1986) Lorraine Gray, 60 min., film/video, New Day

A Man When He Is a Man (France/Costa Rica 1982) Valeria Sarmiento, 66 min., film/video, Women Make Movies

Out of the Mouths of Babes (U.S. 1987) Sherry Millner and Ernie Larsen, video, 24 min., Women Make Movies

A Simple Case for Torture, or How to Sleep at Night (U.S. 1983) Martha Rosler, video, 62 min., Video Data Bank

Unit Two: Rural Women

Because of space constraints, I offer this as a sample unit, indicating the kinds of films and tapes which may be usefully shown together, and the kinds of analyses which the subject matter, the different media styles, and the reading may elicit. Looking at the specific details of Latin American rural people's lives challenges college students to imagine forms of labor and social organization they may not have conceptualized before. The films and videotapes listed here incorporate different styles and genres, allowing for the discussion of the following key topics: semiotics, aesthetic issues -- especially realism, anthropology, intercultural communication, national and regional specificity, and global economic structures which contribute to rural poverty all over the world. The readings use social analysis, testimonials and oral history, and case studies of the kinds of women's organizing which occurs in many poor countries with large, oppressed rural populations. Other units could be constructed around different topics which would achieve the same goal -- to expand the parameters of the students' social and cultural understanding. In fact, the same kinds of issues raised by this unit would be important to deal with in any unit which deals with oppressed people's self-expression in film/video as well as their (and the students') relation to dominant cultural forms.

Some of the films/tapes are documentaries which are similar to oral histories. These are sometimes accompanied by a published autobiography of the woman in the work or an article on the work. An exemplary film in this genre is *Carmen Carrascal*, which gives a feminist view of the life of a rural craftswoman on Colombia's Atlantic Coast. It was made by a collective of women filmmakers from the capital, Bogota. In this documentary, Carmen discusses family life, her mule, basket weaving, and domestic madness in a way which brings out feminist themes. I have written on this film in an essay which also contains a study of *A MAN WHEN HE IS A MAN* and the work of the Taller de Video Popular and women videomakers in the Sandinista labor unions in Nicaragua. The essay discusses different ways of producing documentaries and differing relations to the people filmed/taped.

Other such documentaries include *LAND FOR ROSE*, directed by Teté Moraes who headed a group of videomakers who worked with farmers for a number of years as the farmers struggled to gain homesteading land in Brazil. The tape is reminiscent of *HARLAN COUNTY*, U.S.A. in the close relation between the makers and the people depicted. *ELVIA: A FIGHT FOR LAND AND LIBERTY* offers a portrait of a Honduran organizer of peasants' unions. Videotaped by U.S.-based Latino filmmakers, Laura Rodriguez and Rick Tejada Flores, Elvia Alvarado speaks articulately about the collective struggle of the poor in Latin America to gain justice, especially to gain decent working conditions and land. Her oral history is available, and there she discusses other issues about life in Honduras, the U.S. military presence there, her role in organizing farmers, land takeovers, arrest and torture, and the progressive role of the Catholic Church, marriage and the family and machismo.

Two other famous oral histories told by peasant women are accompanied by either a filmed portrait of the woman or of women like her. The teacher should explicitly discuss issues raised by the ways of representing these women, the stylistic means used in the

films and videotapes, the relations between media makers and subjects, and the structures, contradictions, and psychology presented in all these documentaries. Such issues are not raised by the media makers nor the films or tapes. Domitila Barrios de Chungara's famous oral history *Let Me Speak!* testifies to women's endurance under and resistance to the most savage oppression. Her lament for the lives of Bolivian tin miners is well accompanied by the videotape, *HELL TO PAY ENGLAND* by Alexandra Anderson and Ann Cottringer, which provides an emotionally moving analysis of the international debt situation through Bolivian mining women's eyes. The oral history, *I, Rigoberta Menchu*, similarly offers a graphic testimonial about the savage effort to exterminate indigenous villages and culture in Guatemala. There is a finely shot, feature-length documentary film, *WHEN THE MOUNTAINS TREMBLE* by Pamela Yates and Tom Sigel, about repression in Guatemala which focuses on the life of one woman. Here, Rigoberta Menchu herself functions in the film as an emblematic narrator who symbolizes national resistance. Since this film is shot with all the style and craft of a feature fiction and it was not advertised as a documentary, the facts of its production and distribution, as well as its style, add to the richness of the theoretical discussion about oral history's relation to a realist documentary film style.

Other documentaries, made in a more traditional expository style, deal with the global economy of agriculture. They can be viewed for information and also for the way they present information. In particular, the issue of "structures" can be raised. What structures must we understand to understand the lives of rural woman in South America? What are the limitations of such concepts, of their presentation in film and video? Without such concepts, what would be lacking in our understanding? How many ways can media present explanatory social concepts?

Consuming Hunger demonstrates how U.S. media manipulates images of starvation in Ethiopia while it neglects to cover homelessness in the United States. Although this series of three tapes is about Africa and not South America, it analyzes what the consequences are of the media's tendency to create an image of the poor as a pathetic victim, always safely other. Furthermore, feminists from Asia, South America, and Africa often address the issue of hunger as one of the principle factors shaping women's lives on an international scale. They see that hunger and malnutrition are directly caused by international capitalism and multinational corporations' sacking their arable lands, natural resources, and ecosystems. Politically conscious women in poor areas of the world all discuss the effects of malnutrition on their people's health, especially the effects on children, as part of their self-conscious identity as *woman*. When students understand hunger as an international feminist issue, they can begin to see how for most women in the world, women's concerns mesh inextricably with issues of race, class, and international politics.

Starving for Sugar analyzes how sugar cane workers from the Philippines to the Caribbean have become pawns in world economy and politics. *The Business of Hunger* depicts how cash crops are exported from underdeveloped countries where people are starving. And bridging the gap between oral history and structural analysis is Ecuadorian filmmaker Monica Vasquez's *Time of Women* which documents life in an

Andean village, where the women have taken over the field work because the men have migrated to the United States to look for work.

Some of the most interesting films and tapes present or incorporate rural women's own dramatic performances about their situation. In *Sweet Sugar Rage*, Sistren, a women's theater troupe, acts out the problems which a sugar-cane worker, Iris, has with the male-dominated agricultural unions and with management. Discussions after the performance help audiences formulate solutions. *Mecate: A New Song* was made in collaboration with a peasant theater collective which contributed to rural organizing in Nicaragua. It shows performances on farms plus the discussion of issues which followed. *Miss Universe in Peru* focuses on a bourgeois event which is *critiqued* by women agricultural organizers. The film juxtaposes the 1982 Miss Universe Pageant, held in Lima, against the reality of most Peruvian women's lives, especially in terms of the negative influence of multinational corporations. These films and tapes, taken together, raise issues about self-presentation and the dramatization of one's own issues, along with a depiction of some of the audiences for those dramatizations.

Two documentaries by North American anglo women explicitly take up issues of documentary strategies and kinds of meanings conveyed. *Before We Knew Nothing* was made by an U.S. anthropologist, Diane Kitchen, living with the Ashaninka Indians of Eastern Peru. Kitchen's film interrogates the conventions of anthropological filmmaking and her relation to these people. I made *EL CRUCERO* in collaboration with Nicaraguan women videomakers as an experimental documentary which depicts life on one Nicaragua farm in four narrative segments, each in a different documentary style. Each movement also incorporates different sound/image relations, so as to provoke a consideration of how viewers translate media information about other countries and how documentaries convey social relations in general. I was also able to publish a complete translation of the interviews gathered on that farm.

Feature fictions made by Latin American directors allow the class to raise problematic issues which come up in relation to most commercially successful, progressive fiction films. *SUGAR CANE ALLEY* has many comic moments and emphasizes the strength of family bonds as it follows a Martiniquan peasant grandmother who leaves her rural house to help her grandson attend school in the capital. By concentrating on the story of that boy, director Euzhan Palcy uses a conventionally acceptable theme about the talented young male intellectual who can escape and then reflect nostalgically on his roots. *IRACEMA* depicts in semi-documentary style what happens to an Amazon-River-boat adolescent who becomes a prostitute in Belen and is abandoned in the jungle backwaters by a truckdriver. The film's naturalist narrative repeats the commercially successful formula of the doomed poor. *GAIJIN* deals with the suffering and loss of social identity Japanese workers faced as they migrated to work as indentured labor on Brazilian haciendas. The film exists in the U.S. only in a poor-quality print, but is excellent for showing the multicultural complexities of ethnic issues in Brazil. It too has a naturalist framework about the progressive emiseration of the poor (see Nochlin).

Readings

Alvarado, Elvia. *Don't Be Afraid, Gringo: a Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart*. Trans. and ed. Medea Benjamin. San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1987

Chungara, Domitila Barrios de. *Let Me Speak!* Trans. Victoria Ortiz. New York: Monthly Review, 1978

Lesage, Julia. "Life and Work in El Crucero." *Radical America* 19.5 (1985)

Lesage, Julia. "Women Make Media: Three Modes of Production," *The Social Documentary in Latin America*. Ed. Burton.

Menchu, Rigoberta. *I, Rigoberta Menchu: an Indian Woman in Guatemala*. Ed. Elisabeth Burgos. Trans. Ann Wright. London: Verso, 1984)

Nochlin, Linda. *Realism*. Baltimore: Penguin, 1972

Media --

Before We Knew Nothing (U.S. 1988) Diane Kitchen, film, Women Make Movies

Carmen Carrascal (Colombia 1984) Cine Mujer, 30 min., film/video, Women Make Movies

Consuming Hunger: Famine and the Media (U.S.) 3 stand-alone, inexpensive, 28 min. tapes -- "Getting the Story," "Shaping the Image," and "Selling the Feeling." Maryknoll

El Crucero (U.S. 1988) Julia Lesage, video, Facets and Foreign Images

ELVIA: A FIGHT FOR LAND AND LIBERTY (U.S. 1988) Laura Rodriguez and Rick Tejada Flores, video, 28 min., Laura Rodriguez

GAIJIN (Brazil 1979) Tizuka Yamasaki, 105 min., film, New Yorker

HELL TO PAY (England 1988) Alexandra Anderson and Ann Cottringer, 52 min., Women Make Movies

IRACEMA (1979 Brazil) Jorge Brodansky, 90 min., Cinema Guild

LAND FOR ROSE (TERRA PARA ROSE, Brazil 1987) Teté Moraes, video, 90 min.

Mecate: A New Song (ROPE, Nicaragua 1984) Felix Zurita de Higes, 40 min., film, First Run/Icarus

Miss Universe in Peru (Peru 1984) Grupo Chaski, 42 min., film/video, Women Make Movies

Starving for Sugar (U.S.) 58 min., video, Maryknoll

SUGAR CANE ALLEY (Martinique 1983) Euzhan Palcy, 103 min., film, New Yorker

Sweet Sugar Rage (Jamaica, 1985) Sistren with Honor Ford-Smith and Harclyde Walcott, 45 min., film/video, Third World Newsreel

The Business of Hunger (U.S.) 28 min., video, Maryknoll

Time of Women (Ecuador 1988) Monica Vasquez, film/video, 20 min., Women Make Movies

WHEN THE MOUNTAINS TREMBLE (U.S. 1983) Pamela Yates and Tom Sigel, 83 min., film: New Yorker, video: Skylight Pictures

Unit Three: Documentary Practice and Documentary Texts

The previous unit was structured around social process deriving from rural life as subject matter for media representations. In a course for film and videomaking students, it is also useful to structure a course around documentary practice and documentary texts. Because of the critique of realism in contemporary film and literary theory, many writers look for the degree to which documentary filmmakers represent themselves in their work. In other words, a clear critical distinction is often made between cinema verite and self-reflexive cinema, the latter also including the interrogation of cinematic process within the film.

For film students, however, these critical distinctions are less useful. Media makers are used to seeing all media representations as artifacts. They often understand when seeing a film what the makers' relations with the film's subjects were, evidenced by such audio and visual traces as composition within the frame, or microphone or lens choice. Whether or not a filmmaker appears as a personage within the film seems more a conceit to prove his or her authenticity to viewers later on.

In fact, most documentaries create an other, for they reify, interpret, and simplify the people filmed. During the time of scripting, the pre-production phase, and the moment of filming, film/videomakers readily acknowledge what anthropologists do not. A documentary filmmaker is always looking for drama, people to interview who are lively subjects and have good stage presence, and dramatic moments to capture. The mise-en-scene should have good light, minimal traffic and wind noise, and a visual environment which can shot so as to "speak" for the persons in it. People are chosen to appear in an interview who are "contemporary" and "interesting"; they talk succinctly, use imagistic language, and know how to deliver a punch line. Many media makers would prefer to avoid using an oppressed group's leaders on screen if these people did not have good screen presence, the kind which makes someone a star witness on film. In this light, in their journal entries the students can interrogate the works seen in terms of a comparison with their own production experience, or with a projection about what they as media makers could or would have done with the same topics or locales.

I know from the experiences of my peers that many media makers who wish to make oppositional tapes/films and work with groups who do not have access to making media often have struggles with these groups around acknowledging painful realities and contradictions within the tape or film. A common example would be a film's depicting the degree to which the women still are subordinate to the men within a militant group. As media makers, we know the value of depicting contradictions to lend a work drama and credibility. As *political* media makers, we know that although contradictions are painful to recognize, in fact those are the points of social movement, the pressure points leading to change, and the places where the future is already visible within the present.

Each documentary shown should be subject to close textual analysis. In their journals, students can examine the various works' representations of and assumptions about subjectivity and objectivity. Who is given the voice? What is the relation of voice to image? Is the voice emotional? Which social structures does it take for granted, and which does it explicitly teach? Are multiple voices respected in the editing? To what degree is difference enhanced and preserved, and to what degree are other cultural constructions of the person and of common sense flattened out and reinterpreted so as to "communicate" to U.S. viewers? Do individual speakers or people seen on the image track reveal their multiple social roles or discontinuous layers of self? Does the film/tape show people (on the sound or image track) in the multiple, constantly shifting positions from which one person's subjectivity can be expressed?

More likely, the people interviewed become characters, used for their typicality. An illusion of fairness may come from incorporating interviews which "show both sides," but films rarely challenge their most emotionally convincing or eloquent interviewees. One of the advantages of using self-reflexive formal tactics both in the scripting and the editing stages is that it allows filmmakers to locate their vision as separate from the people speaking in the film. Experimental documentaries strive to find ways to represent their own process as they re-present the lives of others. But it is difficult to balance both tasks at the same time: to show how the media operates and to give others "the voice."

The systematic aspects of documentary structuration can be examined explicitly for what they reveal about the vantage points from which media looks at people's lives. For example, how does the camera move through time and space and how is the film edited? To what degree do details about and from people's daily lives remain part of the background and to what degree are the systems of meaning which shape these details made explicit? For example, it is useful to interrogate documentary images by asking, "In contrast to the camera work here, or the edited construction of time and space, how would these people move through time and space? What would they say is important to know about what we see?" Students should analyze in their journals what audiences rarely do: the selection and framing of images, and the ambient sound and music tracks. The students can also analyze television images of life in other countries. These documentary images are often reductive in predictable ways, expressing the "family of man," "poverty," "exotic beauty," or "chaotic rage."

The teacher must be careful not to grant the insider's voice a kind of primal innocence as an interviewee. People who appear in documentaries have an emotional stake in being interviewed. There may even be a reciprocal kind of transference relation between filmmaker and interviewee, in which each is projecting on to the other his or her assumptions and needs. Often being interviewed inspires a person to "pull her/himself together" so that s/he speaks from a more coherent persona than usual. Who can understand what is or what is not contained in the kind of partial truths commonly spoken in an interview? The person interviewed might not have seen the larger perspective and have spoken out of a restricted vision. Furthermore, filmmakers edit according to their own aesthetic and social vision. Frequently in an intercultural situation a filmmaker may not understand the context of the words which s/he recorded and used. Commonly among oppressed peoples, the person interviewed may have a more complex perspective than s/he chooses to present, implicitly evaluating while speaking the kind of information listeners would reject because their ideas were already formed by dominant ideology.

Published interviews with film/videomakers may reveal the time spent and the social process of making a media project, as well as the economic and institutional resources available to the maker. Documentary media, especially in video format, is a less expensive genre, which is for that reason often chosen by poorer artists. Latino artists, Latin American filmmakers, and artists working for social change are often those of limited means. As a documentary videomaker, I am particularly concerned with creating equitable processes for making media with under-represented groups. In terms of my own practice, I have found that it is most useful to gather the broadest possible input during the pre-production and scripting stages and to give the people I taped veto-power over their self-representation at the rough edit stage. But since people's imagination about the kind of media they might like about themselves has been shaped by feature fiction and television, I say at the beginning of our joint venture that from the time of shooting through the rough edit, I will be in charge of the piece.

I begin the project with a written contract detailing the production process, credits, copyright, and use of unlikely profits. Usually I pay all the production costs, raising funds if I can. The agreement states that after production, if there are any profits, the costs of filming and editing will be deducted and returned to me. I retain copyright with the agreement that we both have equal rights to distribute the work. Windfall profits, such as those from a television sale, would go into a previously designated fund. I use standard release forms as well, signed at the time a person does an interview in either the pre-production stage or the final videotaping (this is so that audio material from the preproduction stage can be used, if necessary, in voice off). My preference is for experimental documentary production, with the final structure often elaborated at the editing stage. Sadly I have found that there is an inverse relation between formal innovation and successful commercial distribution of documentary work.

Institutional mechanisms for distributing documentaries are different in the United States and Latin America. Film festivals have played a major role in letting these works be seen. The reception of militant documentaries has to be considered in terms of their use within specific struggles. We have only a partial record of Latin American and U.S.

reception of all these works. We do not know much about who has seen these films and tapes, nor under what circumstances. Usually such details come out in interviews with the director. In the United States, a few socially committed distribution companies distribute almost all of these works.

Below are documentaries which could be profitably matched with each other in various units analyzing the relations between media making practice, textual structures, and modes of reception. A first category is cinema-verite, which should be reexamined not only in order to critique cinematic realism (which is perhaps too easy) but also to look at relations between the maker, the people filmed, and the potential audiences implicitly addressed. The Mexican Tapes were shot over a number of years in a San Diego housing complex where video artist Louis Hock lived and taped his neighbors' conversations with him and also their ongoing daily lives. The people in the tapes are undocumented immigrant families. Hock tapes them in San Diego and in Mexico as they work here, are deported, and return. Significantly Hock and his neighbors speak together in both Spanish and English. Home Life was shot by myself and Chuck Kleinhans at the request of Seattle-based minister, Randall Mullins, who was living with a poor family for six weeks in Estelí, Nicaragua. Mullins wanted this tape made to take back home to his congregation. I did a simultaneous translation as Silvia Diaz spoke about her family and their suffering under Somoza and who showed us how they were living in 1984. Inside these tapes is evidence of the intimacy between North American media makers and the people whose lives are the subject matter of the works.

Cinema verite made by Latin American filmmakers indicate the special advantage of the insider's eye and the different social relations evoked in front of the camera when the media makers are *of* the culture they film or tape. A pioneering work by a Colombian ethnographic filmmaker, Marta Rodriguez, and her husband, Jorge Silva, *The Brickmakers*, is a study of the barrenness and isolation faced by a family doing the hardest kind of backbreaking labor to just get by. They all make bricks in an arid area on the outskirts of a big city. *Women's Town Hall Meeting* is a U.S.-distributed excerpt from a weekly Sandinista television program, *FACING THE PEOPLE*, which taped various town meetings across Nicaragua where citizens gathered to meet with national leaders and ask questions. This episode documents part of a long public meeting where women confronted Daniel Ortega and other leaders before Nicaragua's constitutional convention. It shows lively discussions of family violence, the double day, and abortion. In *Susana* the filmmaker, Susana Blaustein-Muñoz, a young Argentine lesbian, discusses family strife and homophobia as she looks back on family life from the perspective of her position now in the United States. *Look at My People How They Struggle* documents an extraordinary testimonial from women prisoners in El Salvador as they bring their wounded close to the prison walls where they scream out about abuses. This visual testimonial was videotaped by women demonstrating outside the prison walls with El Salvador's Comadres, the organization of the mothers of the disappeared. *Don't Forget Me* is a beautifully composed and edited work by Chilean video artist, Tatiana Gaviola. It documents a "street theater" demonstration in which masses of people brought life-sized cardboard cutouts of the dead and disappeared to stand against walls and telephone poles in Santiago's city center. Clearly the

demonstration was organized with the idea of making the videotape. Gaviola's achievement is thus the culmination of a larger project of public art.

Related to cinema verite are films and videotapes which have a more synthetic structure, often using a collection of interviews but sometimes using other narrative devices to give an overview of some aspect of life in Latin America. These projects are usually made with a sense of urgency. The media makers and the people they represent want to teach repressed or ignored social structures to a larger audience, an audience whom it is crucial to reach within the context of an ongoing organizing effort or political struggle. Interestingly, the media made for these specific purposes often has a longer life than its original struggle, since the kinds of structures and contradictions brought out in one struggle often have something to teach participants in another.

Las Mujeres del Mercado/Women of the Marketplace is a co-production between U.S. videomakers -- Annie Goldson and Ann Crenovich -- in collaboration with Nicaraguan media women -- Maritza Flores, Mercedes Martinez, Darling Rios, Miriam Loaisiga, Aida Redondo, and Marina Torres. The Nicaraguan videomakers chose the topic of the tape, marketwomen. These women have always played an important role in Nicaragua's economy and here have a chance to answer back to commonly heard charges of hoarding and blackmarketeering. In *We Are Not Asking for the Moon*, seamstresses organize to recover bodies from their workplace after the earthquake. Then they form a seamstresses' union, facing constant opposition from the bosses, the government, and the official union hierarchy. The film project began as a documentation of the earthquake and over the course of time became a collaborative project to help the seamstresses' organizing campaign. *The Pope: Pilgrim of Peace?* shows ordinary Nicaraguans' view of the Pope's visit there, and the tape delineates the conflict between right and left forces among Catholic clerics and faithful. It was made by a Sandinista trade union group and shown in union halls and several times on television in Nicaragua. It has had a somewhat broader audience inside the United States. When U.S. Latina Graciela Sanchez was a student at the international film and video school in Cuba, her thesis project was *NOT BECAUSE FIDEL SAYS SO*, which presents Cuban gays and lesbians addressing the camera about being homosexual. Sanchez used her unique position to make this tape as a political act -- to raise this issue among Cuban media makers and to bring back information that U.S. gays and lesbians need to know.

I have found two films effective in my classes for demonstrating the clear impact of U.S. imperialism on the lives of people in Latin America. Somehow these two works are among the most eye-opening and persuasive for otherwise conservative students. *La Operación* analyzes how and why 1/3 of Puerto Rican women have been sterilized by U.S.-imposed family planning. *Roses in December* tells the life of Jean Donovan, one of four Catholic religious women from the U.S. murdered by the Salvadoran military, and the lack of U.S. government support as her family members have tried to investigate and redress her death.

Experimental documentaries by Latin American women mediamakers take up issues of racial mixture and intercultural penetration. In *The Darkness of My Language* Sylvana Afran uses a complex audio mix of voices to demonstrate how difficult it is to

communicate across language barriers when people are forced to migrate. *Unfinished Diary* is the most aesthetically accomplished of all the documentary films discussed here. It is a semi-autobiographical study of a Chilean woman artist's multilayered experience of self. Marilu Mallet presents aspects of herself as a person who has no cultural space of her own in exile in Canada. The work must be seen on film and not video, since its use of various film stocks and precise composition, often at the edges of the frame, are some of the subtle ways that the collisions of culture within one person's experience are expressed. In contrast to Mallet's film aesthetic, the tapes made for Brazilian television by the feminist Lilith video collective are made completely in a fast-paced televisual style which owes nothing to film (see Burton on the Lilith Collective). *Black Women of Brazil* depicts the lives of Brazilian black women, who discuss Brazil's racially segregated class system, women's condition, and also the validation they find in traditions of music and religion. *A Kiss on the Mouth* lets Brazilian prostitutes speak for themselves. For students who are sophisticated in their knowledge of modern critical theory or the artistic avant-garde, it is useful to devote journal writing to a contrastive cross-cultural study of either self-reflexive or realist media tactics. For example, none of the works listed above reject emotion, characterization, or typage in the way that such experimental media often does in the United States. Here, for example, the goal in editing is not to fragment narrative structure. Latin American artists use forms which in the United States and Europe are supposed to oppose realism, but for many cultural reasons, these forms are used in subtly different ways (see Lesage on *THE OTHER FRANCISCO* and *ONE WAY OR ANOTHER*)

Only a small amount of the solidarity media made in the United States uses an experimental documentary form. *Las Nicas* conveyed Nicaraguan women's euphoric view of women's role in the new Nicaragua shortly after the revolution, as they contrasted their lives then to their suffering under Somoza; the tape looks at sexual politics, the family, religion, education, prostitution, and work. *Los Hijos de Sandino* was even more euphoric as a lyrical collage shot in Managua during the first anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution. These two works are examples of low-budget media, the first being a video adaptation of a slide show and the second shot originally on super8 film.

Two other solidarity works which are not documentaries are worth noting here for their innovations in aesthetic form. *For a Woman in El Salvador, Speaking* is a lyrical interpretation of a poem by Carolyn Forché about a "disappeared" girl in El Salvador which manages to be trilingual, in English and Spanish and American sign language. *Eyes that Fail to See* is made in a soap-opera format for AIDS education. It was made in both Spanish and English versions to use in Latino barrios. It deals, often humorously, with issues of prostitution, teenage sexuality, IV drug use, and homosexuality, perhaps using a popular fictional form and comedy to discuss social conditions which could not be shown in a documentary way. The need to make and widely distribute media to combat AIDS raises issues about the ethics and legality of documentary presentations, such as showing sterile IV drug use, interviewing sexually active minors, or filming a condom being placed on an erect penis. In particular, it raises questions about what documentary can easily communicate and what it cannot.

Finally, the class should considering the creative use of artistically mixing documentary, history, news reportage footage, and national legend within feature fiction films, since this occurs frequently in of Latin America. Of special interest in the way that they deal with women's lives and take up issues of sexual politics are the following features: *Frida: A LIVING Still Life* has as a narrative structure a fragmented portrait of the life of Frida Kahlo, shot in the style of her paintings. Kahlo is one of the great women artists of the Americas, and her life and the lives of the famous people she knew have been well documented. *FRIDA* concentrates less on biography than on an homage to her painting, which is a cinematic tour de force. *Hour of the Star* is also based on a well-known document, in this case the Brazilian novel of the same name by Clarice Lispector. Both the novel and the film rework the naturalist tradition to depict a poor young urban woman's "doomed" life and her subjectivity as well. *One Way or Another* is filled with revolutionary optimism as a middle class schoolteacher and a working class factory worker in Havana fall in love and deal with both gender-based and workplace conflicts. *PATRIAMADA* began with the shooting of actual political events and then was fleshed out with a story about a love triangle which plays itself out against the documentary background of Brazil's mass movement for democracy. *Vera* offers a complex view of life of an orphaned teenage lesbian in Rio. *MACU: THE POLICEMAN'S WIFE* was based on a newstory in the Venezuelan press and developed into a fiction about woman married off as a child who grows up dissatisfied in that relationship. It is an unusually candid study of girlhood sexuality and a family's complicity in child sexual abuse.

More material has been presented in this course file than can possibly be taught. Admittedly, an utopian burden has been placed on the journal as a learning tool. However, it is not utopian but challenging for a teacher to stop using films and videotapes as self-explanatory illustrations of "life in other cultures" and instead teach them as complex examples of a process of intercultural media production and reception. Such processes must not remain invisible but can and must be taught.

Texts --

Burton on Lilith Collective

Lesage, Julia. "ONE WAY OR ANOTHER: Dialectical, Revolutionary, Feminist." *Jump Cut*

Lesage, Julia. "THE OTHER FRANCISCO:

Media --

Black Women of Brazil (*Mulheres Negras*, Brazil 1986) Sylvana Afram and Lilith Collective, video, 25 min., Women Make Movies

The Brickmakers (*CHIRICALES*, Colombia 1972) Marta Rodriguez and Jorge Silva, film/video, 42 min., Cinema Guild

THE Darkness of My Language (Brazil) Sylvana Afran, video, 3 min., Women Make Movies

Don't Forget Me (Chile, 1988) Tatiana Gaviola, 14 min., video, Women Make Movies

Eyes that Fail to See (Ojos que no ven, U.S. 1988) Latino AIDS project, video, 50 min., Instituto Familiar de la Raza

For a Woman in El Salvador, Speaking (U.S. 1987) Sara Halprin, with AMES, the women's association of revolutionary El Salvador, film/video, 7 min., Women Make Movies

Frida: A LIVING Still Life (FRIDA: NATURALEZA VIVA, Mexico 1985) Paul Leduc, 120 min., film: New Yorker, video: Facets

Home Life (U.S. 1984) Julia Lesage, 27 min., video, Facets and Foreign Images

Hour of the Star (LA HORA DE LA ESTRELLA, Brazil, 1985) Susana Amaral, 96 min., video: Facets, film: Kino)

A Kiss on the Mouth (Brazil 1987) Jacira Melo and Lilith Video, 28 min., video, Women Make Movies

La Operación (U.S. 1982) Ana Maria Garcia, 1982, film/video, 40 min., Cinema Guild

Las Nicas (U.S. 1984) Julia Lesage and Carole Isaacs, video, 45 min., English and Spanish versions, Facets and Foreign Images

Look at My People How They Struggle (El Salvador 1985), film/video, 27 min., El Salvador Media

Los Hijos de Sandino (U.S. 1982) Fred Barney Taylor and Kimberly Safford, 42 min., film/video, Third World Newsreel

MACU: THE POLICEMAN'S WIFE (Venezuela, 1986) Solveig Hoogesteijn, 90 min., film/video, Macu Films

MARKETWOMEN OF NICARAGUA (LAS MUJERES DEL MERCADO, Nicaragua 1986) Collective production, video, 28 min., Ann Crenovich

THE Mexican Tapes (U.S. 1987) Louis Hock, four 54 min. tapes, Facets and Video Data Bank

NOT BECAUSE FIDEL SAYS SO (NO PORQUE DIGA FIDEL CASTRO, Cuba 1988) Graciela Sanchez, video, 14 min., Graciela Sanchez

One Way or Another (Cuba 1974) Sara Gomez, 78 min., film: New Yorker, video: Center for Cuban Studies

PATRIAMADA (BELOVED COUNTRY, Brazil, 1985) Tizuka Yamasaki, 100 min., film/video, Yamasaki

THE Pope: Pilgrim of Peace? (Nicaragua 1983) Videonic and Taller Popular de Video collectives, video, 38 min., First Run/Icarus

Roses in December (U.S. 1982) Ana Carrigan and Bernard Stone, film, 56 min., First Run/Icarus

Susana (U.S. 1980) Susana Blaustein-Muñoz, 25 min., film, Women Make Movies

Unfinished Diary (JOURNAL INACHEVÉ, Canada 1982) Marilú Mallet, 55 min., film, Women Make Movies

Vera (Brazil, 1987) Sergio Toledo, film, 87 min., New Yorker

We Are Not Asking for the Moon (Mexico 1986) Mari Carmen de la Lara, film, 58 min., First Run/Icarus

Women's Town Hall Meeting (Nicaragua 1987) Ann Crenovich, part of videotape collection: TV SANDINO, 10 min., XChange TV

Distributors --

(Note, these should be rechecked just before publication, since they change or go out of business rapidly. Debra Zimmerman of Women Make Movies and Gary Crowdus of Cinema Guild often know where things are.)

Center for Cuban Studies, 124 W 23 Street, NYC 10011, 212/ 242-0559

Cinema Guild, 1697 Broadway, NYC 10019, 212/ 246-5522

DEC Films, 394 Euclid Ave, Toronto, ONT M6G 2S9, 416/ 925-9338

Democracy in Communication, 124 Washington Place, NYC 10014, 212/ 463-010

El Salvador Media Project, 335 W 38 St, Fifth Floor, NYC 10018, 212/ 714-9118

Facets Multimedia, 1517 W Fullerton, Chicago IL 60614, 800/ 331-6197

First Run/Icarus, 200 Park Ave South, #1319, NYC 10003, 212/674-3375

Foreign Images, Gretchen Elsner-Sommer, 1213 Maple Avenue, Evanston, IL 60202

IDERA Films, 2524 Cypress St, Vancouver, BC V6J 3N2, 304/ 732-1496, 738-8815

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Kino International, 333 W 39th St, #503, NYC 10018, 212/ 629-6880

Julia Lesage Video, 3480 Mill St, Eugene OR 97405, 503/ 344-8129

Macu Films C.A. and Cinearte C.A., Sabana Grande, Calle Villafior, Edif. Asunción, Piso 3, Ofic. 302, Caracas, Venezuela, 71-02-65 or 443-25-26

Maryknoll World Video and Film Library, Media Relations, Maryknoll, NY 10545, 1-800-227-8523

Teté Moraes, Vemver Comunicacao, Rua Joa Borges 83, Gavea 22, 415 Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, 55-21-266-7245

New Day Films, 853 Broadway, #1210, NYC 10009, 212/ 477-4604

New Yorker Films, 16 W 61 St, NYC 10023, 212/ 247-6110

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Laura Rodriguez, 1931 Buchanan, San Francisco, CA 94115, 415/563-7917

Skylight Pictures, 330 W 42nd St, NYC 10036, 212/ 947-5333

Third World Newsreel, 335 W 38th St, Fifth Floor, NYC 10018, 212/ 947-9277

Video Data Bank, School of the Art Institute, 280 S Columbus Drive, Chicago, IL 60603, 312/ 443-3793

Women Make Movies, 225 Lafayette St, #211, NYC 10012, 212/925-0606

XChange TV, PO Box 586, NYC 10009, 212/ 260-6565

Tizuka Yamasaki, Cinema Brasil, Rue do Catete 311, #916, Rio de Janeiro, 22.220 Brazil, phone: 295-4805 (h)/285-4814 (w)